

INTER The National Safecracker™

Meilink Fire Safes

Part 4



The official publication
of the

INTER National Safecrackers'
Organization™

Summer 2019

CONTENTS

Short Single-Door: Overview	4
Tall Single-Door: Overview	6
Punching the Handle Cam	11
Drill Points	13
Drilling the Federal Lock.....	17
Drilling the Dial Ring	24
Different Boltwork and Relocker!.....	27
Short Double-Door.....	33
Tall Double-Door	37
Short Modern Single-Door	39
Another Modern Single-Door	41
Meilink/Gardex.....	43

**Dave McOmie**

In This Issue

Yet more Meilink fire safes! Every safe in this issue has the tapered 'L' handle shown here. Meilink used this unique handle on a variety of safes, from small single doors to large double doors. We only see a small number of different locks in safes with this handle. What's interesting are the differences in boltworks.



Meilink tapered 'L' handle. You will find this handle on fire safes with 1-way, 2-way, and 4-way boltworks. With the exception of a few private-labeled safes from Canada, the rule is that the lock points toward the handle. You will find external relockers in two different locations, though I think we have ways of telling them apart, as you are about to see.

Penetration Party



Dates & Places

When: September 14-15
Where: Security Safe
 1753 Addison Way
 Hayward, CA 94544

When: October 26-27
Where: McElheney Locksmiths
 1214 Jefferson Avenue
 Toledo, OH 43604

Cost: NSO Members \$349
 Non-Members \$449

Lunch is included both days, but it is BYOT (Bring Your Own Tools).

It is first-come, first-served, with 20 spots available at each Party. Email Dave to reserve your spot.

Dave McOmie

Dave McOmie
 e-mail: davemcomie@me.com
 website: www.davemcomie.com

**The National
 Safecracker's
 Organization™**

Director
Dave McOmie
Published in U.S.A.

Unsolicited manuscripts
 are accepted, but must include SASE.
 © 2019 Dave McOmie
 All Rights Reserved.

Summer 2019

Short Single-Door: Overview



Standard features: the famous (to safecrackers) 4-M spyproof dial, tapered 'L' handle, skirt, and hinge straps with two horizontal ridges.



S&G lock is mounted RH. Notice the 4-way boltwork. External relocker is above the lock, angled downward toward a cutout in the handle cam. Arrow points to the breakaway screw in the two-piece handle cam. Just about every Meilink fire safe comes with a breakaway screw — too much pressure applied to the handle causes this brass screw to shear, resulting in a free-spinning handle. ©

Tall Single-Door: Overview



Same standard features as the previous safe. Notice the two ridges on each hinge strap. On single-door safes, these ridges (or their absence) help us determine RL location.



Close-up of dial and handle. This is one of the all-time great dials: the famous Meilink/S&G with not just one 'M' but four of them around the edge of the large dial knob. Handle is in the unlocked position.



Back side of door. Notice the square plate that covers the area and the lock.

Close-up of the square plate. Notice there is no CKH. So, do not side drill behind the door to try and read the change key hole, because there is no hole in the plate.



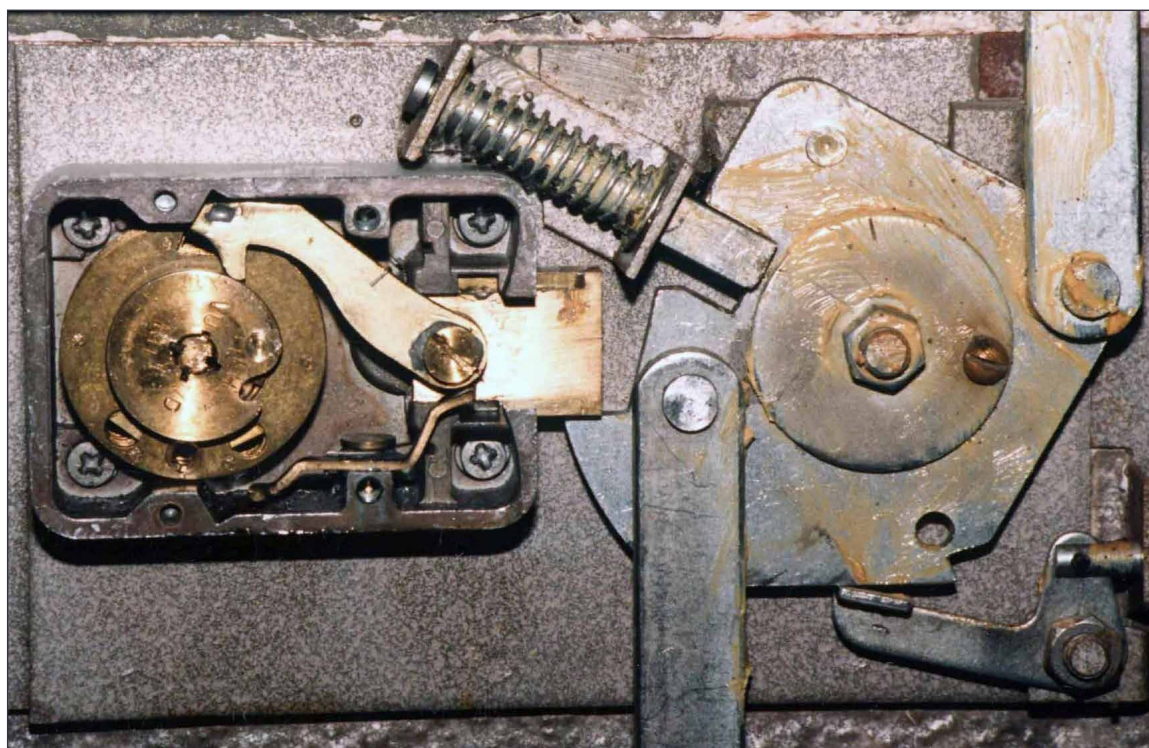
Again, a 4-way boltwork.
Impressive for a fire safe!





S&G lock is mounted RH. External relocker is above the lock, angled downward toward a cutout in the handle cam. Arrow points to what was originally a bronze or brass breakaway screw in the two-piece handle cam. That screw has been replaced with a steel one, which is a no-no. Let's look at what it should be below.

Different but virtually identical safe, but this one has the original soft, breakaway screw in the two-piece handle cam. Relocker is shown in the fired position.



Punching the Handle Cam

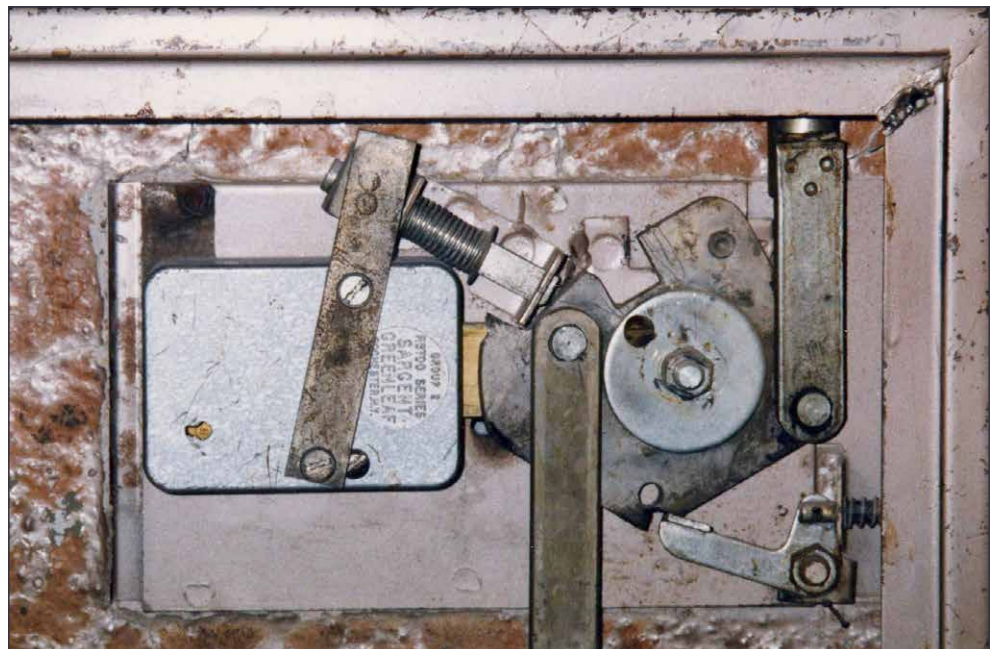


We are all products of our past. As a teenager, I had a bad experience punching a handle cam. I don't remember make or model, but I disconnected the bottom bolt from the cam. I didn't punch a handle cam for many years after that. So let's punch this one!



Punch is in drilled hole with hammer en route. This is a commercial-grade fire safe with a 6730, so the DP for cam punching is: 2 11/16" L, 11/16" D.

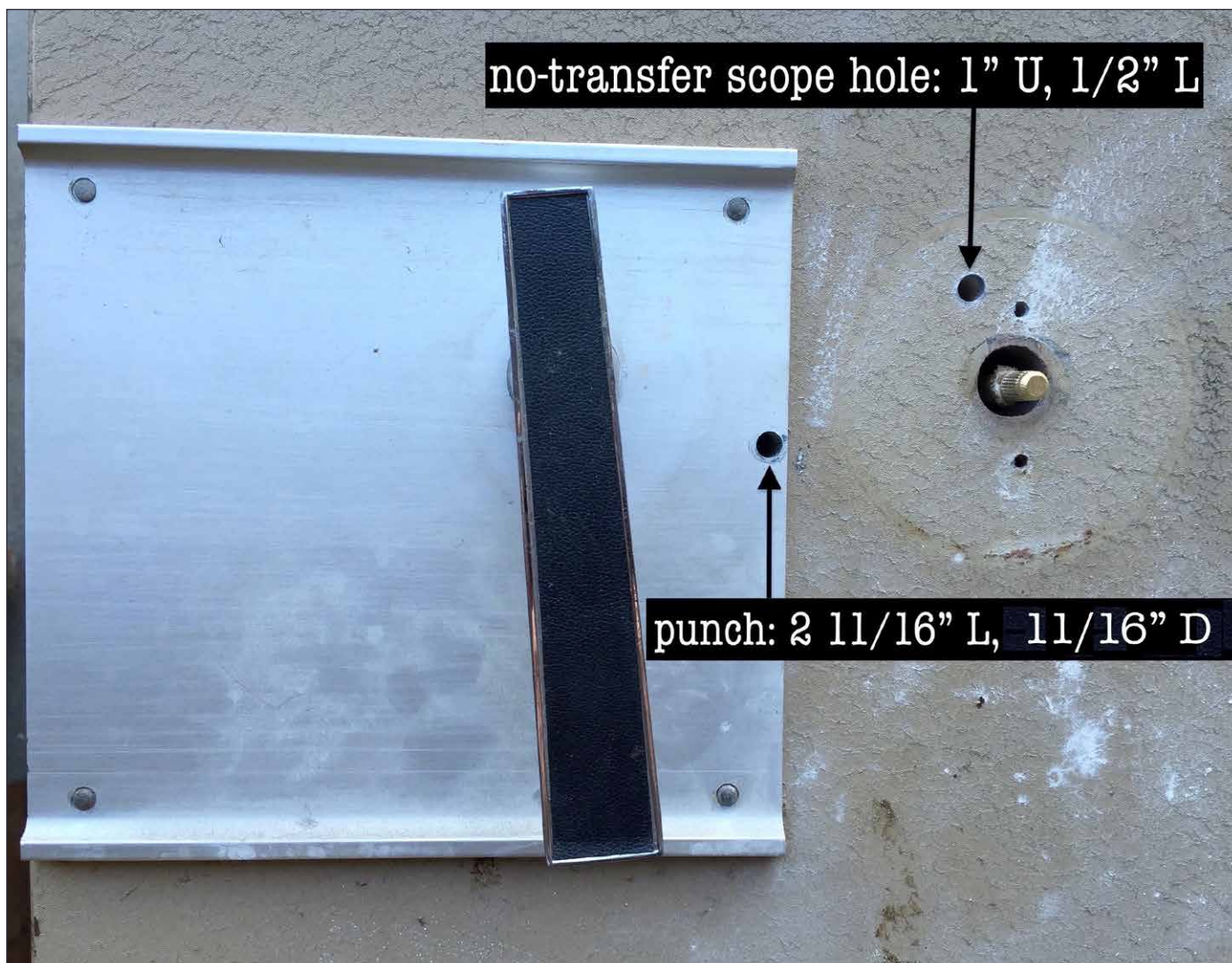
Success! Notice that the lock is still locked, but the handle cam is rotated to the unlocked position. The drilled hole can be seen just below the lock bolt.



Drill Points



We opened this one twice at the same PenParty. The following drill points are good on all sizes of Meilink's commercial-duty fire safes.



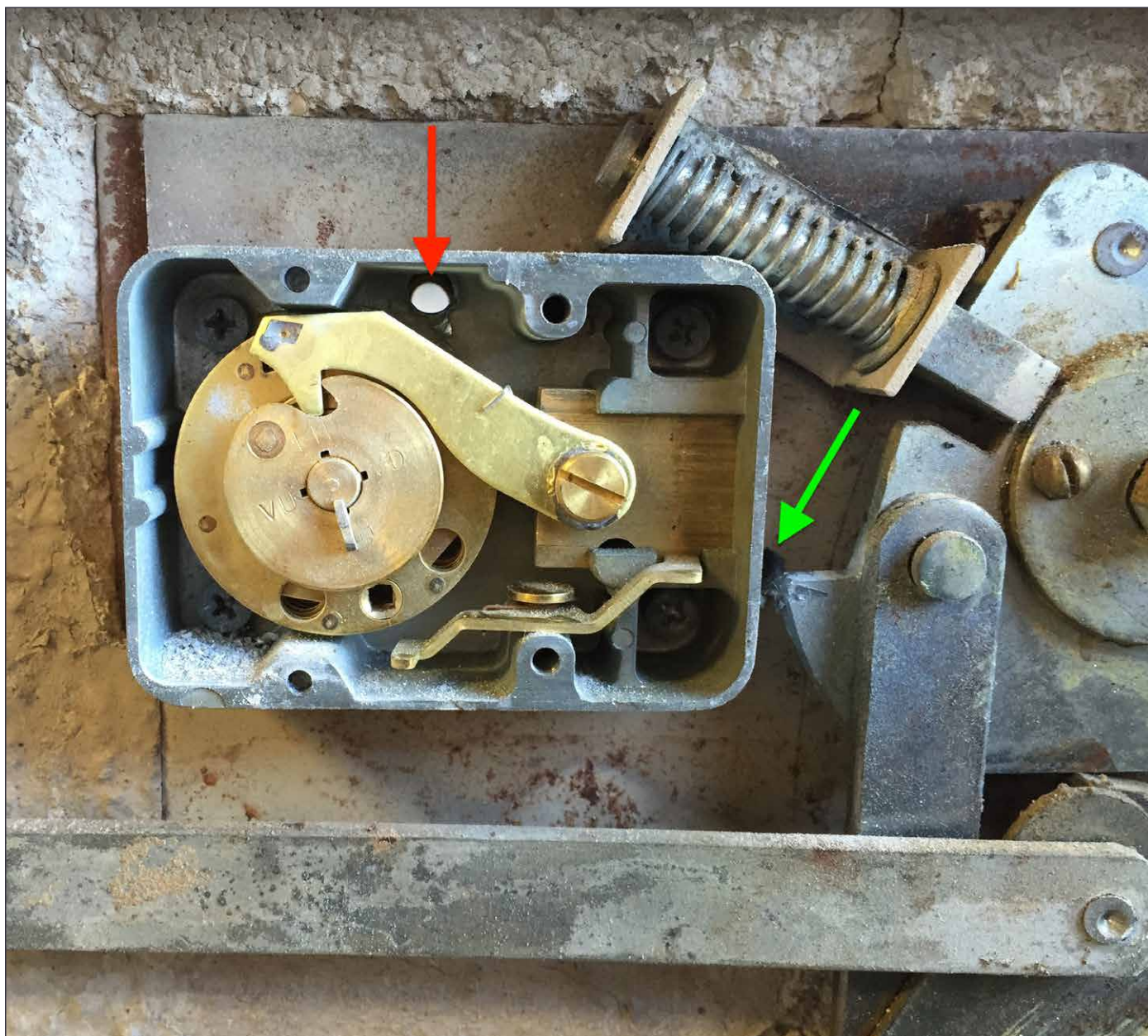
We punched the handle cam first, and opened the door. Then we locked it back up and drilled a no-transfer scope hole into the lock. The advantage of punching the handle cam is that you don't have to mess with the dial, and it's fast. The disadvantage is having a repair site that can be difficult to cover without it looking funny.

Tip: always look in the hole with a 0 degree scope and watch while you wiggle the handle to confirm that your hole is indeed on the tip of the handle cam. This helps to avoid possibly firing a RL if your drilling aim was off.

The advantage of pulling the dial and drilling a no-transfer scope hole is that the repair is under the dial ring and hence invisible when the job is complete. It's your call on every job!



Back side of door with back panel removed. This is a 4-way boltwork, with one door bolt on the opening side, two on the hinge side, and one each top and bottom. The lock is mounted RH. Arrow points to the hole that was drilled to punch the handle cam.



Close-up of area around lock and handle cam. Red arrow points to the no-transfer scope hole. Green arrow points to the cam-punch hole. The external relocker is in the fired position. One additional drill point will be useful for the future. The RLDP is: 3 5/8" L, 11/16" U. ©

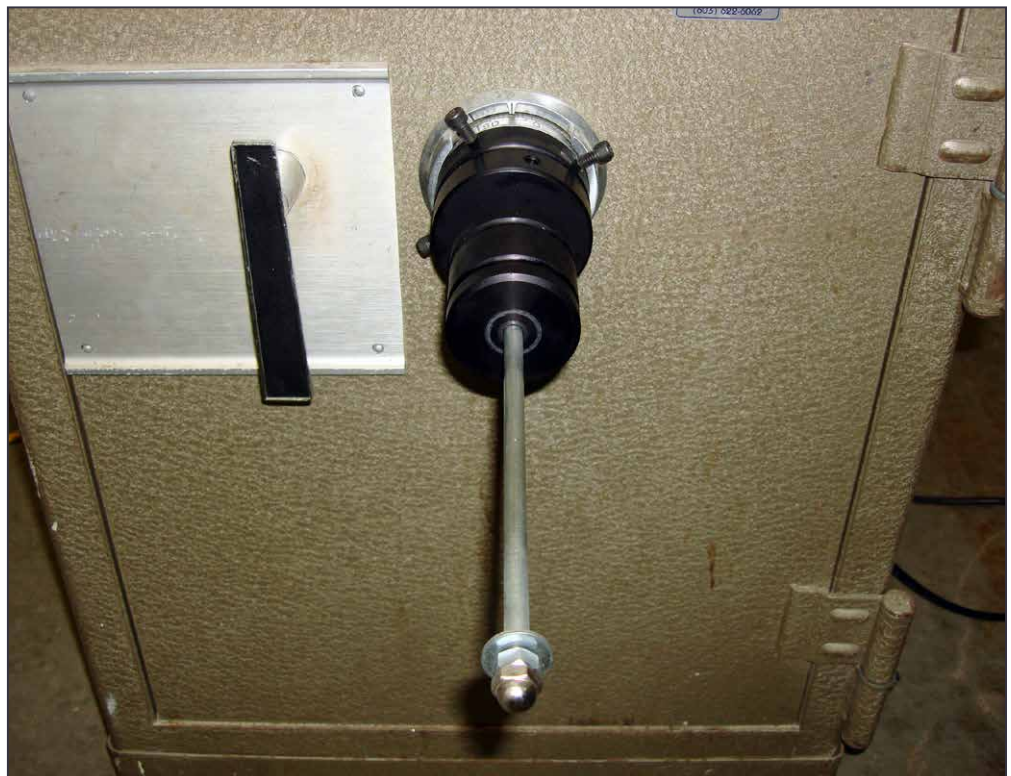
Drilling the Federal Lock



This Meilink caught me completely by surprise. We get so used to samo-samo, and then Bammo!



Spyproof dial.



Slam-hammering the dial off the spindle.

The DP for a no-transfer scope hole is 1" U, 1/2" L. We had to enlarge this one a little and angle up a tad. You'll see why in a minute.



Hopes for the motherlode dashed again. Reminder: there is no CKH in the back panel.



The familiar 4-way boltwork. These safes are workhorses. Very little ever goes wrong ... without an assist from the end user. :-)

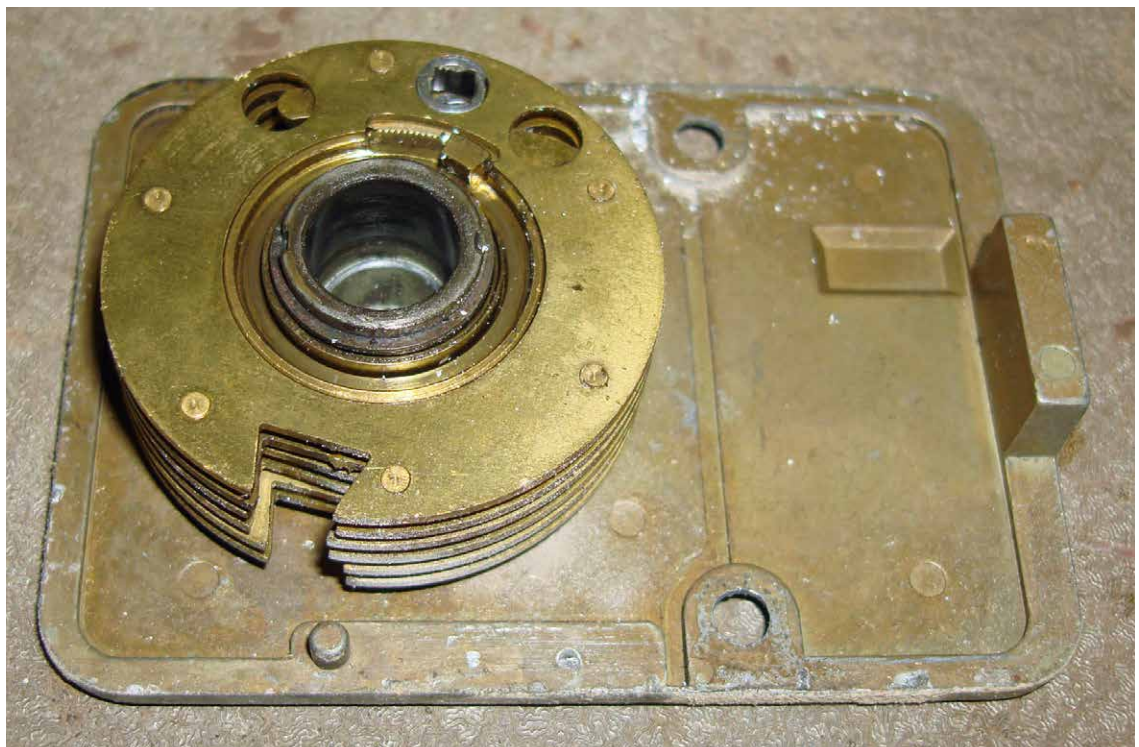
The labels on the back panel.



Total door thickness, and depth to door bolt — all in one photograph.

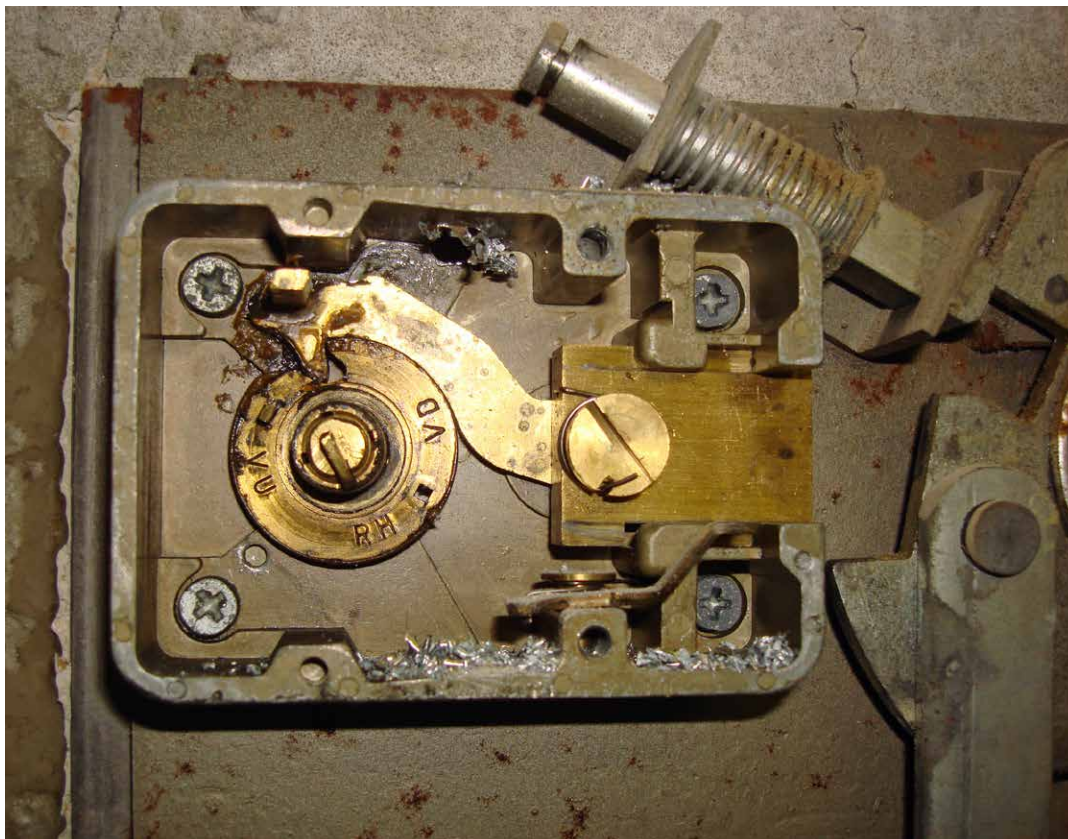
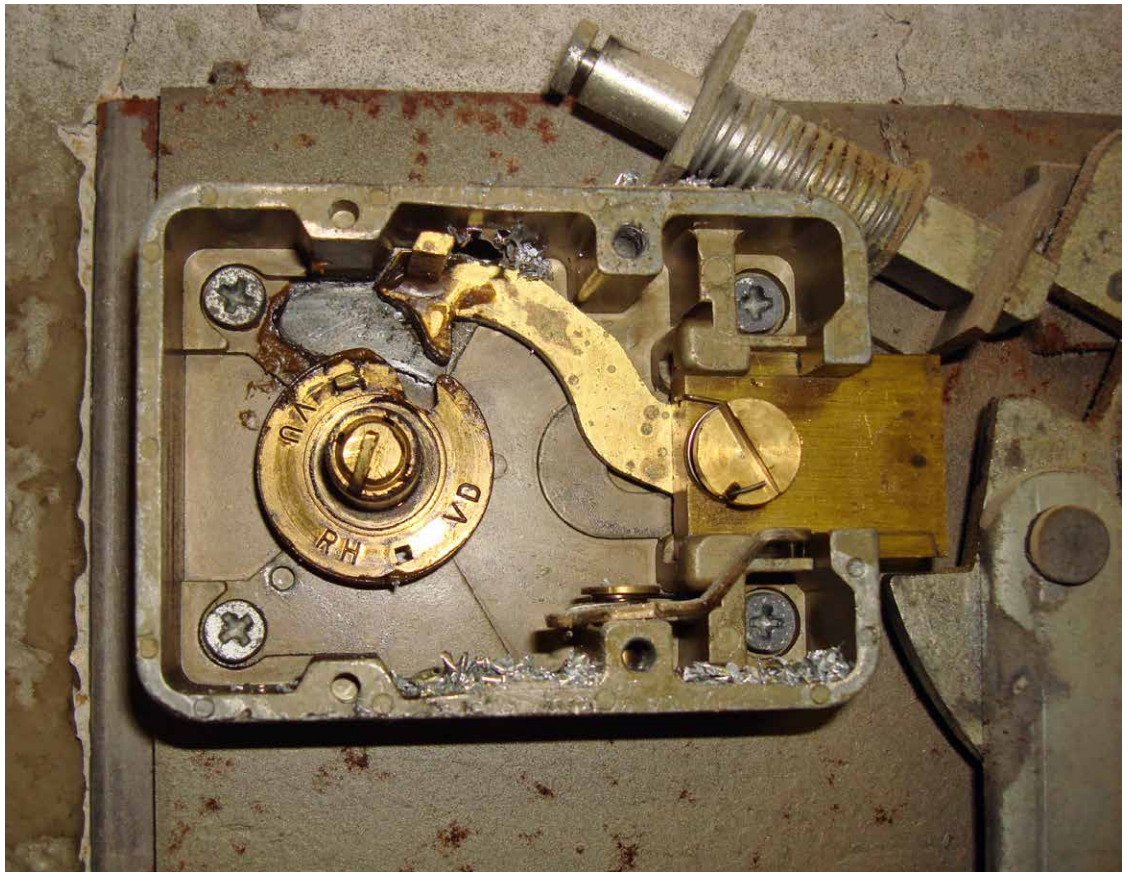


Angled view showing top of lock. Why did we drill so high as to split the edge of the case?



Here is a hint.
Wheels on the back cover indicates ... a front drive lock!

Front drive indeed.
This is an old
Federal 800 series
combination lock.
(The 850 had mesh-
change wheels.) In
this photo the lock
is locked.



We had to drill higher up
in the case to squeeze a
scope over the top of the
lever to look down at the
wheels. Worked great!
In this photo, the lock is
unlocked (but the safe is
still locked).

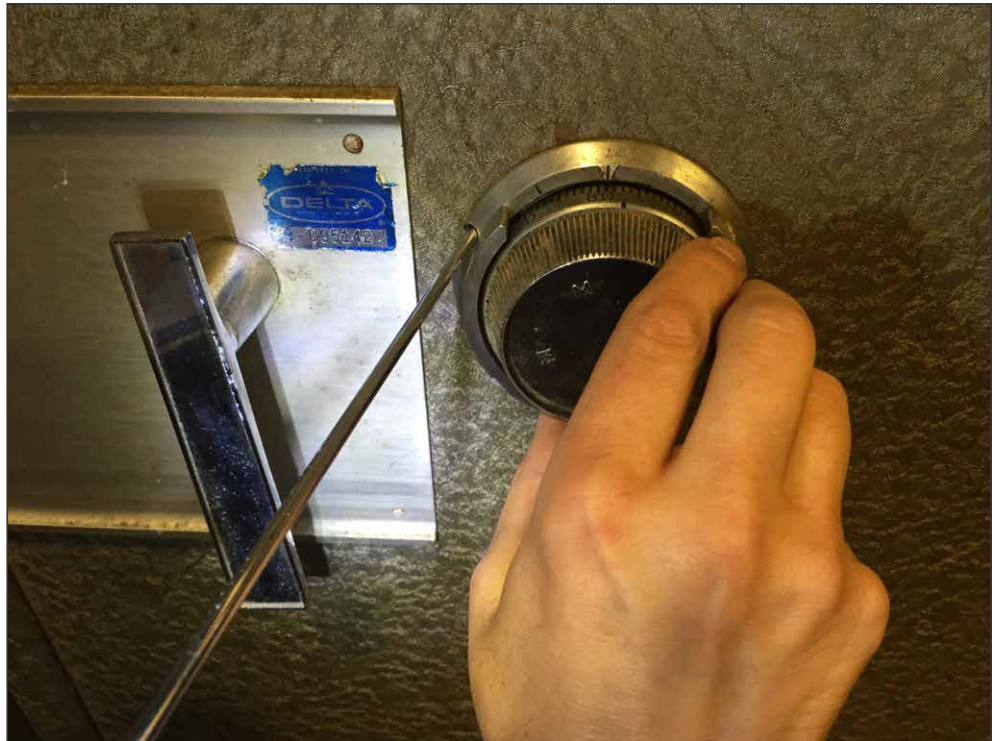


Drilling the Dial Ring

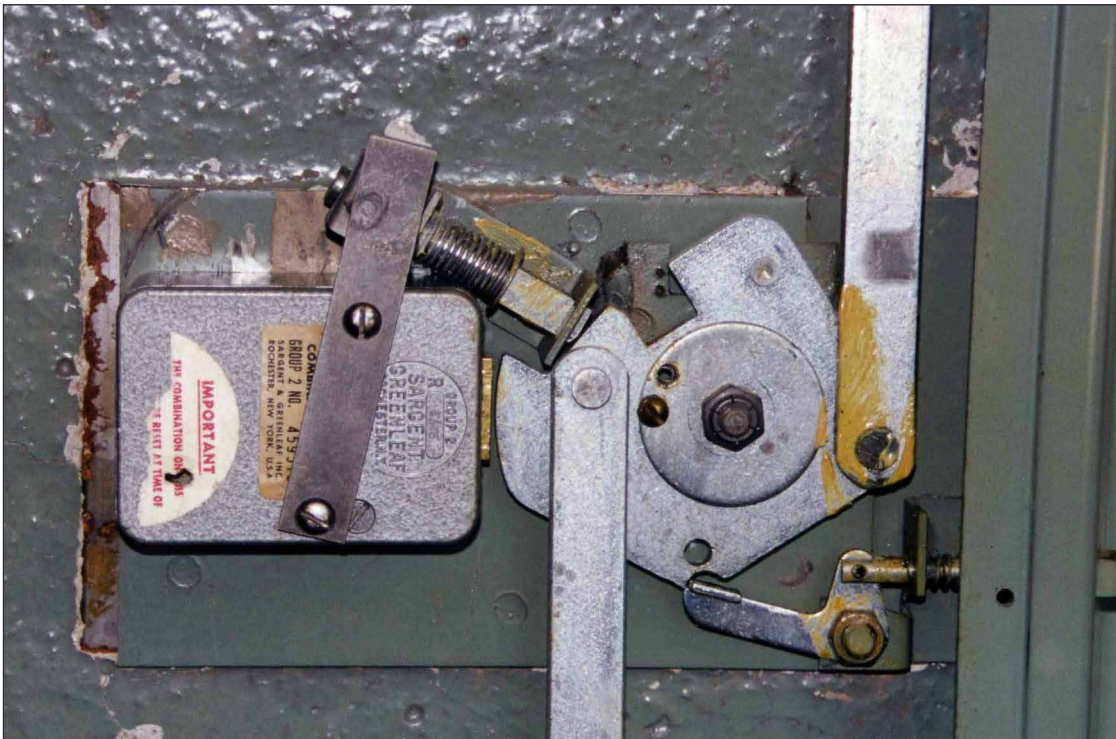


Our opponent. After the near-fiasco with the front-drive Federal lock (see previous article) we decided to leave the dial alone and drill through the dial ring instead.

With the dial set on 0, we drilled through the ring, 1" up from 75. Worked great, but I inadvertently angled down just a tad, as we will see.

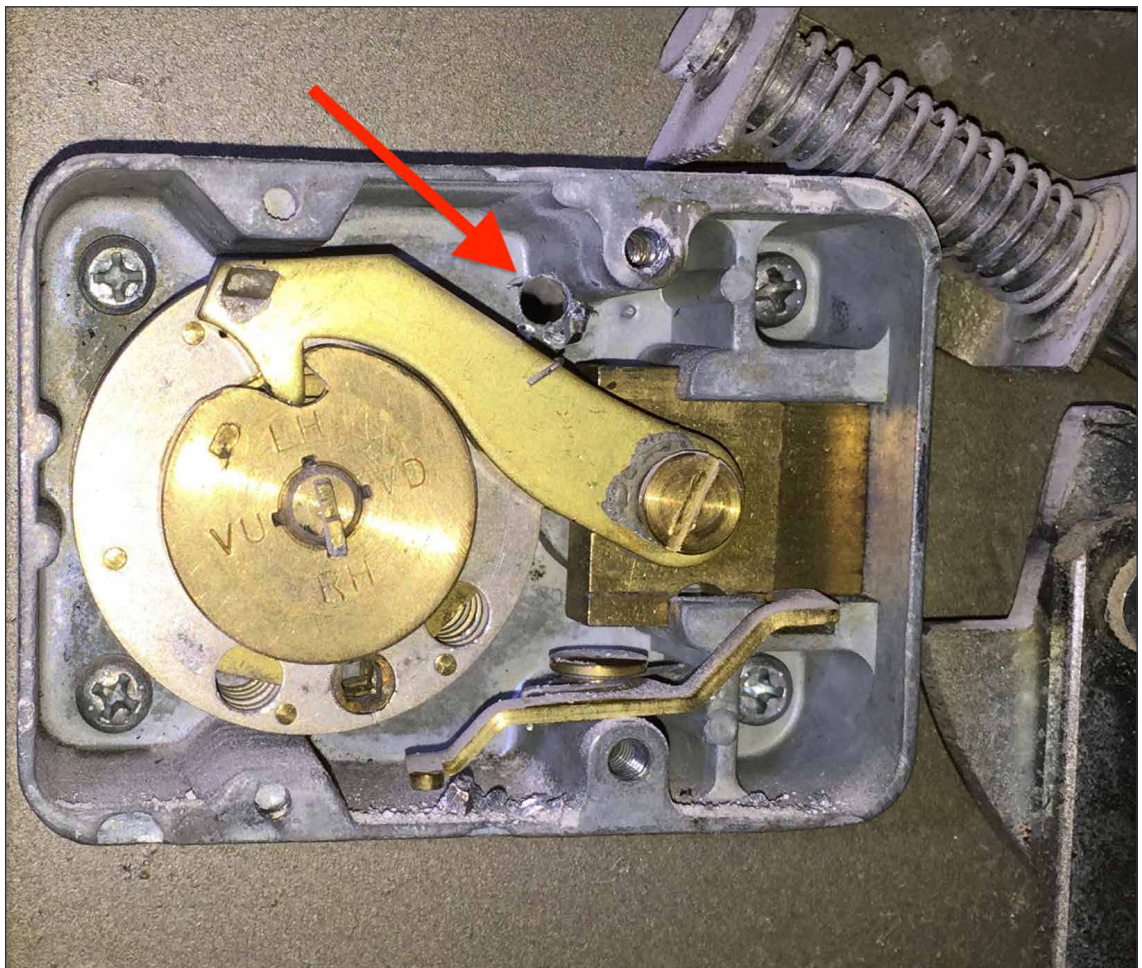


Back side of door with back panel attached. We can see two door bolts on the hinge side, one on the opening side, and one each top and bottom.



Close-up of area around lock and handle cam.

Back cover removed. Arrow points to drilled hole, which should have come out a little higher in the case than it did. But a win is a win is a win!



Different Boltwork and Relocker!



At first glance, this single-door Meilink appears to be virtually identical to the previous safes. It is not! Let's look at the similarities and the differences. The overall look is very similar, but one point of difference is the hinge strap — there are no horizontal ridges! I believe this will help us ID relocker location.



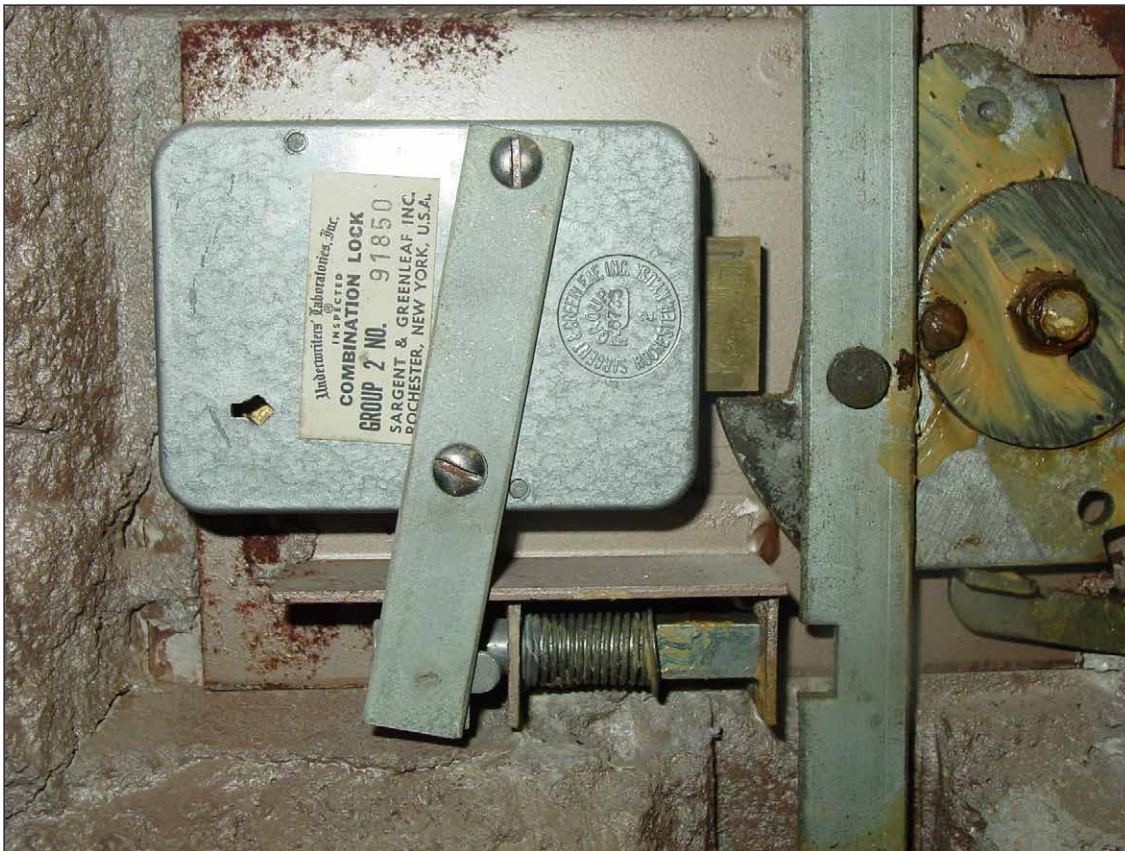
One point of similarity: no CKH in the back panel. One point of difference: instead of the 4-way boltwork we have been seeing, this is a 1-way boltwork, with door bolts only on the opening side.

The labels on the back panel. Notice that the SMNA label is for its fire-resistance, and the UL label is for its having a relocker. Weird, eh?



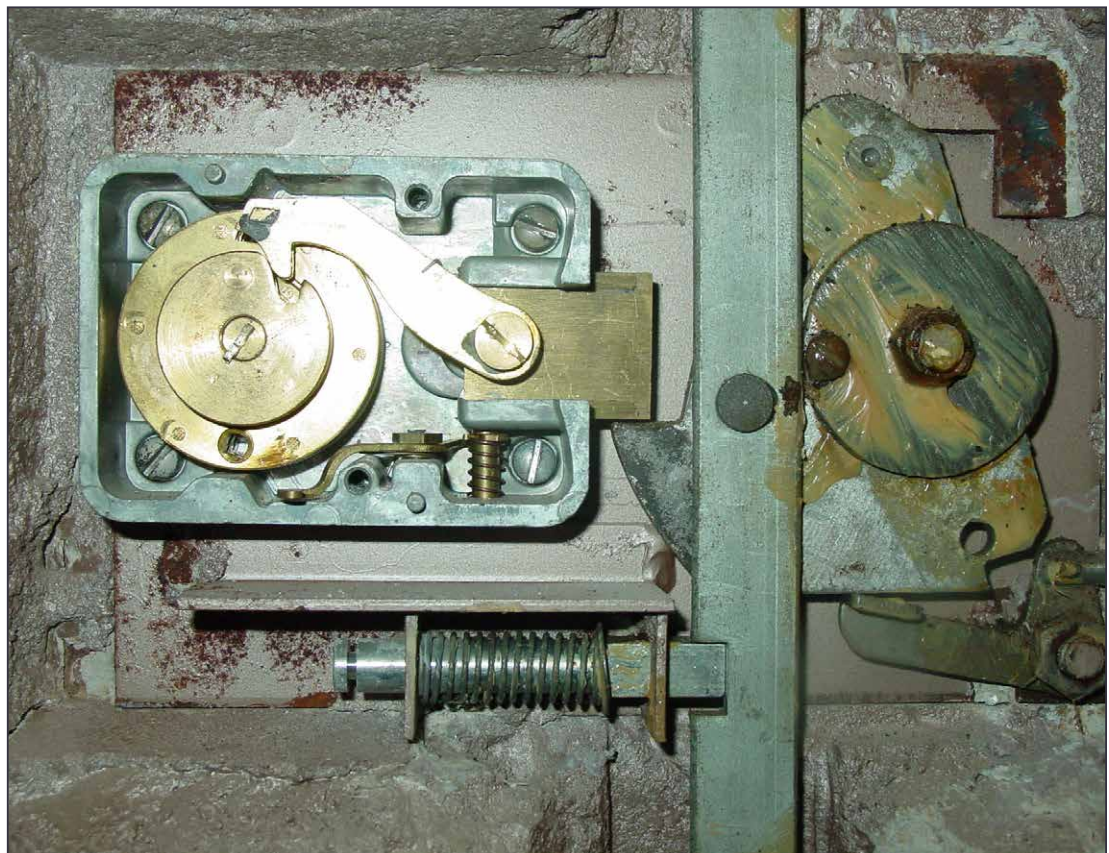


There are two door bolts on the opening side. That's it. Another point of difference: notice that the external relocker is parallel to and below the lock. In Meilink's single-door commercial-duty safes, I believe the lack of ridges on the hinge strip indicates RL below and parallel to the lock (as opposed to above and angled).



Close-up of area around lock, relocker, and handle cam.

With the back cover removed, the relocker has fired. RLDP: 3 1/16" L, 2 1/4" D





This is the same door, but hinged on the left.



On a LH door the RLDP is: 3 1/16" R, 2 1/4" D. ©

Short Double-Door



Short Meilink double-door fire safe. Hmmm, what's up with that dial? Let's zoom in for a look.



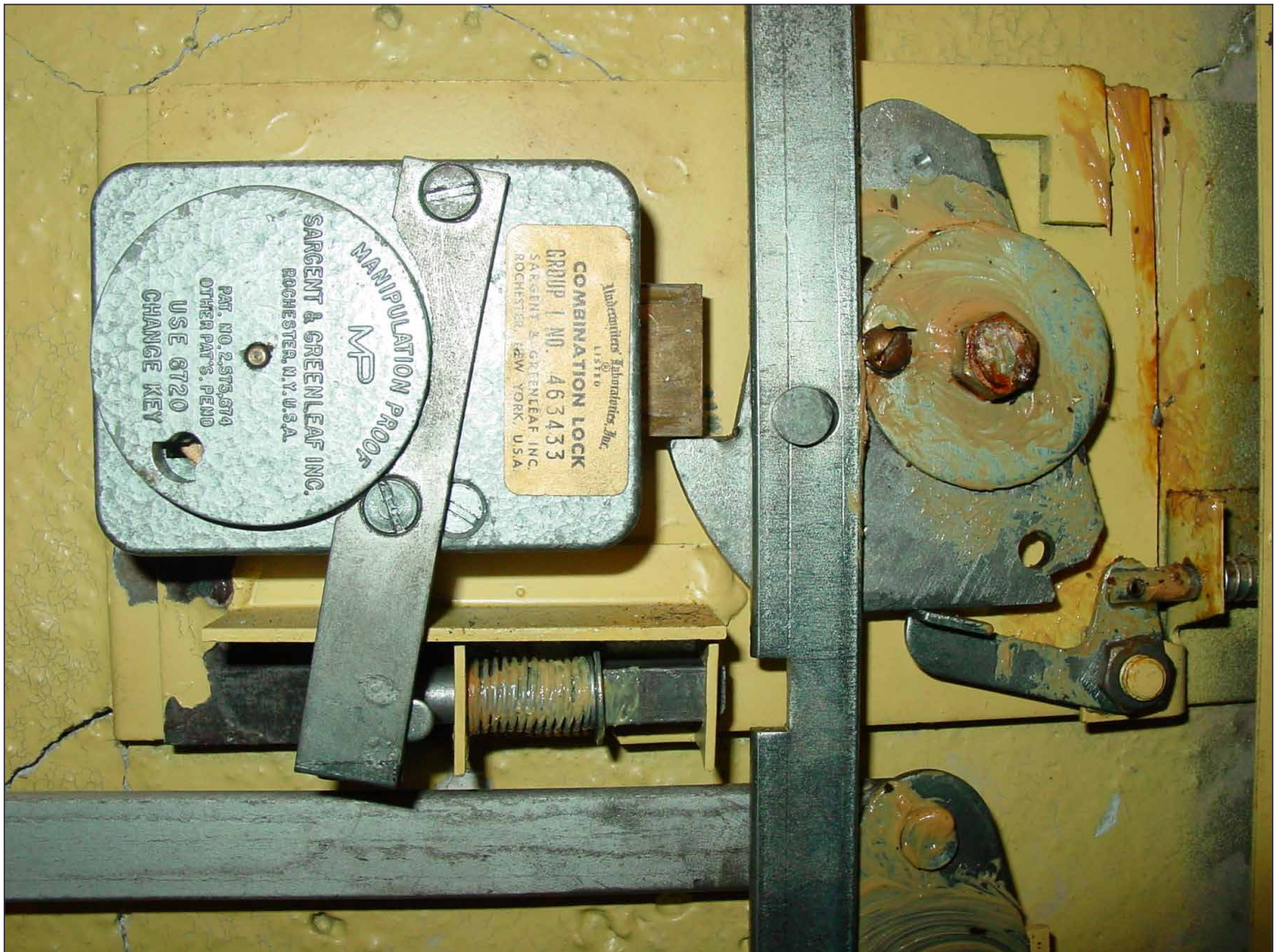
Whoa, a butterfly in dial center — this safe came stock from the factory with an 8400 series lock in it!

Back side of door. Notice there is no CKH in the back panel. This is standard in all Meilink commercial-duty fire safes.





Back panel removed. This is a 2-way boltwork, with three door bolts on the opening side, and two on the hinge side. Notice the location of the external RL: it is parallel to and below the lock, like the single-door safes in the previous two articles.



Close-up of area around lock, relocker, and handle cam. RLDP: 3 1/16" L, 2 1/4" D. ©

Tall Double-Door



Tall Meilink double-door fire safe.



The left (inactive) door.



The right (active) door. This is a 2-way boltwork, with three door bolts on the hinge side, and two on the hinge side.



Short Modern Single-Door



This handle had staying power — Meilink used it for more than a half century! At first glance, it looks like these hinge straps have no horizontal ridges. They actually do, but the chrome covers prevent us from seeing the ridges. ID Tip: with a keylock in the lower position, there is no way this safe can have a RL there. Two things can't be in the same place at the same time!

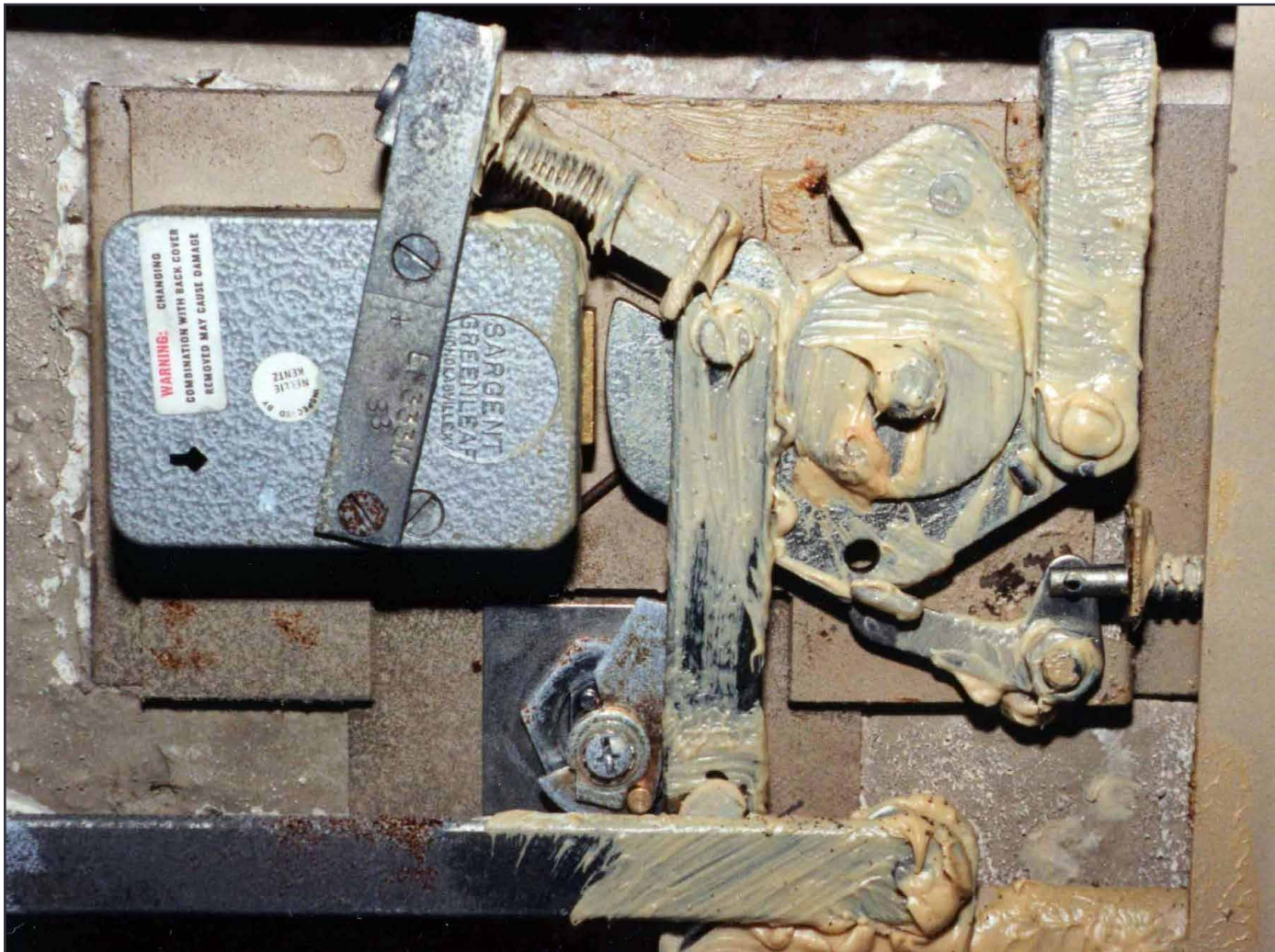


We're back to a 4-way boltwork, with one door bolt on the opening side, two on the hinge side, and one each top and bottom. The S&G lock is mounted RH. The RLDP is: 3 5/8" L, 11/16" U. Take a look at the back side of the hinge straps and you will see that they do indeed have horizontal ridges (see green arrows). ©

Another Modern Single-Door

This was another look Meilink favored for a while. Again, the horizontal ridges on the hinge straps are blocked from view by chrome covers. But the keylock location guarantees us the RL is not below the lock.





This is a 4-way boltwork, the S&G lock is mounted RH, the keylock is below the lock, and the relocker is above the lock, angled down toward the handle cam. RLDP: 3 5/8" L, 11/16" U. ©

Meilink/Gardex



Meilink made some odd moves toward the end of their era, including private-labeling safes made by Gardex in Canada. Well, at least they insisted on using their tried and true handle (which explains why that safe is in this issue).



The S&G lock is mounted VU. The entire boltwork consists of a small locking bar. There is no hardplate and no external relocker. Rise and fall indeed. (M)